



WP4: The Alliance as an Engine for Human Capital

D4.6 Gendered Innovation Training and Mentoring Programme

MODULE 3  
GENDER INEQUALITY and the WORKPLACE

Script  
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## PART 1

### Gender inequality and the workplace

[SLIDE 2]

Gendered norms and expectations shape people's behaviour in workplaces and families and affect the formation of individual identities and individuals' self-assessments. These norms contribute to a vicious cycle in which conformity to gender roles reinforces a social order that perpetuates gender inequality, particularly in the workplace. Disparities in pay, underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and certain sectors, and differential access to opportunities persist between men and women in the European Union (EU) despite considerable progress in recent years.

Gender social norms profoundly influence social dynamics and power structures, playing a crucial role in perpetuating injustice and shaping individuals' agency. Agency, central to human development, reflects people's reasoning about what they consider important or valuable. In other words, social norms influence the conditions in which people make choices and thus significantly impact agency. Biased gender norms hinder women's agency, affecting their economic empowerment and workforce participation. According to the UN's Gender Social Norms Index (GSNI) which quantifies 85% of the global population's attitudes on women's roles along four dimensions (political, educational, economic, and physical integrity), almost nine out of 10 men and women have fundamental biases against women.

This issue extends beyond socioeconomic concerns, as the underrepresentation of women in key sectors and decision-making roles exacerbates gender inequality, placing women at a disadvantage in power dynamics.

[SLIDE 3]

In this context, this training module aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to gender inequality in the workplace by examining key concepts and exploring imbalances in fields such as information and communication technologies (ICT), science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), academia, and research supported by relevant data and statistics in the EU. Additionally, it aims to discuss best practices and policy interventions to address these disparities.

## Setting the stage: understanding gender inequality in the EU workplace

[SLIDE 6]

What do Europeans think about gender inequality?

[SLIDE 7]

Perceptions matter because stereotypical gender perceptions influence and underpin the persistent gender inequalities evident across the EU. Insights from the European Parliament's Flash Eurobarometer 341 survey (2012) on gender inequality shed light on how people perceive gender inequalities. More than half of Europeans (52%), including 58% of women and 46% of men, see gender inequalities as a serious problem in their country.

[SLIDE 8]

Regarding what Europeans consider the primary areas of inequality, violence against women takes the top spot, with 48% of respondents citing it as a major concern. Close behind is the persistent issue of pay gaps, with 43% noting its significance. While 60% of Europeans feel that gender inequalities have been on the decline over the past decade, nearly a quarter (24%) believe they've worsened, and 12% feel there's been no change.

[SLIDE 9]

Almost a decade after this survey, there's a glimmer of hope. The average gender pay gap in the EU dropped from 16.4% in 2013 to less than 13% in 2021, suggesting progress, albeit slow.

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, **gender inequality** manifests in various legal, social, and cultural contexts, where differences in rights and dignity are determined by sex or gender. These disparities result in unequal rights and opportunities for women and men, perpetuating stereotypical social and cultural roles. **Gender balance** is an overall strategy of political action to reform the unequal gendered social structure. The goal of gender balance is to attain equality or parity in the numbers of women and men throughout society: in domestic responsibilities, access to work and business opportunities, positions of authority, political power, education,

and healthcare. Affirmative action in workplaces and universities and mandated quotas to increase the number of women in government are common **gender-balancing policies** (Brown, 2011). Despite progress, the work environment remains hostile to women, evidenced by the gender pay gap, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and slower career advancement. These discriminatory practices perpetuate women's lower socioeconomic status (Stamarski & Hing, 2015).

## Strategies for change: policy framework and implementation in the EU

[SLIDE 11]

Between 1975 and 1995, the United Nations organised **four global conferences focusing on women's issues**, culminating in the adoption of the **Declaration and Platform for Action** during the 1995 Beijing conference. Subsequently, the Council of the European Union mandated evaluations of EU Member States' progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, resulting in review reports by the Council every five years assessing trends in specific key areas.

The European Commission has made reducing gender pay, earnings, and pension disparities a key priority within its **Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025**, aiming to enhance female workforce participation and promote equality across various sectors and work schedules. Additionally, the European Institute for Gender Equality aids EU initiatives by developing Beijing indicators and the **Gender Equality Index**, offering insights into gender equality across EU Member States.

## Gender employment gap

[SLIDE 14]

Employment rates are a crucial indicator of what's happening in the job market. The gender gap, one way to assess employment rates, is the difference between the number of men and women from 20 to 64 years of age who are employed. According to Eurostat Gender Statistics for the labour market, 2022 [8], the EU mean gender gap was 10.8 percentage points, meaning that a higher proportion of men in this age group were working compared to women on average in the EU (see Figure 1).

This gender employment gap varies widely across EU Member States. The smallest gap was seen in Lithuania (0.8 percentage points), Finland (1.2 percentage points),

Estonia (2.9 percentage points), and Latvia (3.1 percentage points). These four countries were the only ones where the gender employment gap was less than 5 percentage points. In contrast, three EU countries had gaps above 18 percentage points. These comprised Romania (18.6 percentage points), Italy (19.7 percentage points), and Greece (21.02 percentage points). However, this disparity is mainly attributable to fewer women participating in the workforce in these countries (fewer women actively seeking employment outside the home).

To gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles and prospects confronting both women and men in the labour market and how gender impacts employment, it is imperative to delve into key factors affecting the distribution of employment: educational level, occupation, self-employment status, full-time versus part-time and temporary positions, and difficulties securing employment over both short and long durations.

## Gender pay gap

[SLIDE 18]

Reducing the disparity in earnings between men and women is an important objective of gender policies. At the EU level, the European Commission has prioritised the reduction of the gender pay gap as a key focus area within the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 to address poverty among women.

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The unadjusted indicator for the gender pay gap is utilised to track discrepancies in earnings between males and females. According to Eurostat [9], in 2022, women's gross hourly earnings across the EU were 12.7% less than those of men on average, with a slightly higher gap of 13.2% observed in the eurozone. The extent of the gender pay gap varied considerably among EU Member States, ranging from -0.7% in Luxembourg to 21.3% in Estonia (see Figure 2).

[SLIDE 21]

Moreover, the gender gap was higher in the private sector than the public in 21 out of 24 European countries in 2022. According to Eurostat, this discrepancy might be due to the public sector's adoption of pay transparency, which applies equally to both genders. In the private sector, the gender pay gap ranged from 8.1% in Belgium to 20.5% in Czechia, while in the public sector, it varied from -0.2% in Cyprus to 15.9% in Switzerland and Finland.

[SLIDE 22]

### Defining key terms

**Pay transparency:** an umbrella term for policy measures that make firm-level pay information visible to address gender pay gaps. Such measures include mandating the reporting of gender wage gaps by employers, equal-pay audits, and publishing salaries in job listings.

## Occupational gender segregation

[SLIDE 25]

Gender stereotypes often deter individuals from pursuing careers outside of traditional gender roles. Across all EU Member States, this has led to male predomination in certain professions like engineering and technology and female in others such as teaching and care work. Of the 20 largest occupations in the EU, only five have a balanced representation of genders. This gender imbalance extends to leadership positions, career advancement opportunities, task allocation, and income distribution within the labour market. The reasons behind this segregation are complex and cannot be attributed to one single factor.

However, addressing gender stereotypes early through the educational system can encourage young women and men to consider non-traditional jobs. Member States should provide gender-sensitive teacher training and career guidance to counteract gender prejudices and enable young people to make informed career choices. Despite efforts to intervene early, transitioning from study to work can still be challenging for those pursuing careers atypical for their gender. Women graduating from STEM areas

still struggle to secure first jobs matching their qualifications compared to men. Gender stereotypes persist, leading women to leave STEM fields, a phenomenon called the "leaky pipeline" effect: twice as many women with tertiary STEM education in the EU end up in teaching roles compared to men.

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To foster a more inclusive job market, initiatives such as Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020) have been implemented. These initiatives aim to eliminate gender stereotypes, ensure equal pay for equal work, promote women's equal participation in decision-making, improve access to affordable childcare, and encourage flexible working arrangements.

[SLIDE 27]

### Defining key terms

**"Leaky pipeline"**: a metaphor describing the phenomenon of a gradual reduction in the participation of women in certain fields as their careers progress, particularly in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This decline becomes increasingly noticeable at higher levels of seniority or leadership positions within the field.

[SLIDE 28]



## Defining key terms

**Horizontal segregation:** the differential concentration of women and men in specific sectors and occupations within the labour market (typically, women are overrepresented in fields that offer relatively low wages).

**Vertical segregation:** the differential concentration of women and men at specific job levels within an organisation (men often dominate managerial and leadership positions, while women are underrepresented in these roles).

## PART 2

### Gender imbalance in information and communication technologies (ICT)

[SLIDE 3]

The exponential growth of the ICT sector over the past two decades has created a pressing need for skilled professionals, yet women remain significantly underrepresented, comprising only 16.7% of employed ICT specialists in Europe in 2016 according to Eurostat (2017). Despite numerous interventions aimed at fostering gender diversity, progress has been minimal, as evidenced by various studies (Gorbacheva et al., 2018). Similarly, Eurostat's recently released interactive publication "Regions in Europe 2023" highlights the crucial role of high-technology sectors in economic growth. They employ 9.8 million people in the EU; however, a notable gender disparity persists, with men constituting 67.2% of the workforce in this sector. Given that women comprise the majority of ICT graduates from tertiary education, addressing the gender imbalance in ICT not only mitigates the shortage of skilled employees but also grants women access to higher-paying positions, potentially reducing the persistent gender pay gap and economic disparities.

Furthermore, fostering diversity within organisations can enhance their capacity to innovate, as demonstrated by a 2017 study by the Boston Consulting Group in collaboration with the Technical University of Munich. It found that gender diversity was highly correlated with innovation enhancement. Further, it wasn't the overall percentage of women in a company's workforce that boosted innovation – only when women occupied a significant percentage of management positions did the benefit become obvious, and particularly when more than 20% of managers at a company were female. This dual benefit of gender diversity not only contributes to organisational success but also aligns with broader societal goals of promoting equality and reducing economic violence against women.

[SLIDE 4]

### Defining key terms

**Economic violence:** a common form of violence against women defined as “any act or behaviour” which causes economic harm to an individual.

## Gender imbalance in academia and research

[SLIDE 7]

The She Figures 2021 report of the European Commission emphasises the persistent gender disparities in R&I. Despite nearly equal percentages of female and male doctoral graduates in the EU-27 in 2018 (48.1% and 51.9%, respectively), women are significantly underrepresented in certain R&I sectors, constituting only 20.9% in business, 26% in senior academic roles, and 24% in decision-making positions within higher education. These disparities occur across scientific disciplines but vary among EU Member States, with unique patterns of gender inequality in R&I in different countries.

As delineated in the She Figures 2021 report, the landscape of R&I is characterised by substantial gender segregation and pronounced gender disparities. Horizontal segregation is observable, with women and men concentrated in distinct scientific domains. Notably, women are disproportionately represented in fields like the social sciences and humanities, while men tend to predominate in disciplines related to engineering and technology.

[SLIDE 8]

Moreover, vertical segregation is clear, exemplified by the predominant male occupancy of top-tier positions. Additionally, research funding distribution is unequal, underscoring persistent gender disparities within the R&I landscape.

The European Commission includes guidelines for gender equality in research and innovation (R&I) in Horizon Europe, its R&I funding programme. The Commission has made it obligatory for organisations participating in Horizon Europe to implement gen-

der equality plans. These plans entail a set of strategies and initiatives aimed at encouraging structural reforms within organisations to promote gender equality. The primary objective is to advance structural, cultural, and R&I changes that mitigate gender disparities and foster inclusivity.

## Conclusion

[SLIDE 11]

The discourse on gender inequality in the workplace underscores the pervasive influence of societal norms and systemic biases, which continue to hinder progress towards gender parity. Throughout this exploration, we have elucidated the profound impact of gendered expectations on social dynamics and individual agency, illuminating the persistent disparities in pay, representation, and access to opportunities. Despite commendable initiatives such as Gender Equality Plans which hold promise for affecting positive change, comprehensive and sustained action is imperative to cultivate genuine equality within the EU workplace.

Gender inequality is not only a statistic but a tangible reality for many individuals. It represents a daily struggle for women against systemic barriers that limit their opportunities, suppress their voices, and subject them to discrimination and violence. Men are affected in other ways by societal expectations of masculinity and, although it is outside the scope of this study, recognising the intersectionality of inequality is crucial, as women of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups face compounded forms of discrimination. Ultimately, understanding these diverse perspectives can drive efforts towards a more equitable and inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, irrespective of gender or identity.